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SNAPSHOT

Partnerships for Health Taking Shape

USAID builds public and private sectors' capacity to engage in effective health partnerships



Photo: USAID/COMPRI-A

A Member of Parliament makes a point in support of public-private partnerships for hospitals at the Public-Private Partnership Steering Committee inaugural meeting.

Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health is taking steps to promote public-private partnerships in the hospital sector to provide greater access and quality of care for the Afghan people.

In Afghanistan, less attention and resources are provided to national, district, and specialty hospitals due to the high costs of service provision and the need for substantial investment, both of which are unaffordable for the Afghan government. As a result, access to quality hospital services is lacking and an increasing number of Afghans seek treatment in hospitals abroad, particularly in Pakistan, India, and Turkey. A recent study found that an estimated \$27 million per year flows out of the country from patients seeking care in India alone.

In response, the Ministry of Public Health is seeking ways to leverage private sector resources to improve access to quality hospital services through public-private partnerships (PPP). Since hospital PPPs are large, complex, and long-term projects, a multi-sector approach is required to ensure national support. The ministry established a PPP Steering Committee comprised of representatives of relevant ministries, the private sector, and investment banks to provide overall direction to the health sector PPP process. "While we acknowledge that much more needs to be done, the ministry has progressed in shaping its framework to effectively engage the private sector in undertaking large hospital PPPs," said Dr. Ahmad Jan Naem, the director general of policy and planning at the ministry.

The steering committee, with USAID support, has initiated a series of workshops for relevant stakeholders, including line ministries and the private sector investors, to increase knowledge of PPPs and opportunities in the health sector. USAID is also supporting the organization of a PPP Unit within the ministry to oversee the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of future health PPPs.

Abdul Wassay Haqiqi, CEO of Haqiqi Auditing and Consulting Company, commented, "I am so impressed that the ministry leadership recognizes the private-sector as a real source of investment and savings, and is taking steps to include us in policy formulation and forthcoming opportunities. I look forward to working with the ministry to demonstrate what private-sector investment can achieve in the hospital and healthcare sector."